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Honest to God

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Honest to God

Perhaps children still use the expression "Honest to God," when they are trying to convince others that they speak the truth. At this time in our lives, we might be more concerned about our relationship with God, considering whether or not we are honest about some of our thoughts and actions. To the degree that we are honest, we will find satisfaction in bringing to God not only what we think, but also our experiences of feelings and inarticulate movements within us.

Being "honest to God" requires that we be honest with ourselves. The two go together, perfectly. When we are honest with ourselves, and do not deny, avoid, or suppress the thoughts and feelings that spontaneously arise within us, we can bring them to God as we become aware of them, and gain the freedom we need for making appropriate responses. When we are consciously and freely honest with God about all that involves us, we experience a wholeness that enables us to live with self-respect.

If we compartmentalize some parts of our lives, never bringing them into our prayer, we can easily become sick in spirit. When we are honest to God, and therefore honest with ourselves, we have an experience similar to a Spring day, when we open all the doors and windows, and allow fresh air to pervade the whole apartment or house.

"Honesty is the best policy" when we consider the quality of our relationship with God. When we hide nothing, intimacy deepens. As we develop friendships with people, we reveal more about ourselves; trust deepens. Yet there is no one on earth with whom we can say that we have shared all of our successes and failures - acts that we are proud of and those we are not. Only God can and does receive us completely in our every thought, feeling, word, and deed, and in all the decisions that we have made.

We learn about honesty in our dealings with one another. Some people deserve our trust, and we can tell them almost anything about ourselves; we are naturally cautious with those whom we sense might harm us. God knows us, but will never use against us that we reveal about ourselves. God is neither jealous of our achievements nor looking for something in us to condemn.

Honesty with God is a measure of our trust in God's love for us. The tendency to "hide" from God is often but a symptom that we are trying

to hide something from ourselves that we do not want to admit or acknowledge. But we can bring to God our most negative judgments, the disordered things we have done and those we have considered, and even the selfish and vain thoughts that have come to us. We can take them all to God, and will find both healing and the grace to make changes in our actions and attitudes.

We do not invent honesty. We find it in our hearts as a great gift of God, to use if we choose. As soon as we decide to bring some of our barely articulated self-knowledge to God, matters will become clearer to us. We will, in the loving acceptance of God, experience insight and inspiration that will help us make choices that are in keeping with our ideals and our purpose in life. As Ignatius of Loyola discovered during the period of his conversion, even the strongest negative thoughts and images lose their power over us when we reveal them to God - or to someone we trust as a "friend of God."

We have implicitly committed ourselves to making whatever changes might be appropriate when we are honest to God.